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ABSTRACT

Extension educators can benefit from using a variety of styles when participating in learning and problem-solving coalitions. The first section of this paper describes nine stages of the coalition-building process, which can be grouped into three phases. In the emergence phase, issues and concerns have heated up and risen to the surface, and factions with a stake in the issues have been called to an initial meeting by a convener. In the stabilization phase, coalition members understand each other's values, interests, goals, and preferences. Norms, procedures, and rules for operating are established and form the basis for future work. In the activation phase, work on the issues is accomplished. This may involve learning, problem solving, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and sometimes renewal and redirection. The second section warns of coalition members who view a formal process as manipulative and suggests that other effective approaches to coalition building may exist and should be sought out. The third section emphasizes that the style or process used by an issues educator must fit the audience, and describes the changes in extension education over the years from a single-discipline endeavor to one requiring interagency cooperation. Extension faculty must analyze their style of teaching and the learning styles of their audience, and be able to adapt their facilitation style. Issues education styles are based on amount of subject-matter expertise and level of process skills. (KS)

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BUILDING COALITIONS FOR EDUCATING AND PROBLEM SOLVING: PROCESS, ROLES, WARNINGS AND STYLES FOR EXTENSION INVOLVEMENT

Fielding Cooley, Andy Duncan and Judy Burridge
Oregon State University

Some educators pay close attention to planning the coalition-building process; others eschew process planning and operate by the seat of their pants. In either case educators can profit from using a variety of styles when participating in learning and problem solving coalitions. Fielding Cooley's section of this presentation outlines a coalition-building process and corresponding roles. Andy Duncan deals with some issues of practical application in the field and, finally, Judy Burridge relates roles and practice to issue education styles.

THE COALITION-BUILDING PROCESS

Fielding Cooley

In building coalitions, it is helpful to know the events likely to occur or those that might be needed to increase the chances of success. The goal here is to describe coalition building as a flexible, iterative process rather than a linear sequence of events.

According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, a coalition is an alliance of factions for a specific purpose. There are different kinds of coalitions; some are made up of members who agree to band together to gain advantages over others, i.e., political parties, lobbying associations, nations and businesses. I am concerned, rather, with coalitions made up of members who have little or no initial agreement on values, goals or strategies. They usually form around the need to solve community or regional problems through consensus and group learning. An example is the Oregon Watershed Improvement Coalition (OWIC). Sometimes, as in the case of OWIC, they just seem to happen with limited strategic planning. In other cases, such as the Lane County (Oregon) Child Abuse Forum in which I acted as a process consultant and facilitator, leaders and organizers attempt to map out a coalition-building process.

The process can have nine stages that do not always occur in the same order. Experience indicates some of the stages may even occur simultaneously. Putting the stages into three phases helps us conceptualize the iterative cyclical nature of the coalition-building process.

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The Coalition-Building Process

Phase 1

Emergence — Issues and concerns have heated up, risen to the surface, and factions with a stake in the issues (stakeholders) have been called to an initial meeting by a convener. There is enough readiness to work together to warrant further activity.

Stages:

1. The Issues Domain or Community Situation — The context in which the issues "live," hence, the place where coalition solutions are tested and recycled. A place to begin, end, or renew.
2. The Emergence of Issues — Issues and stakeholders are recognized in the public arena.
3. Readiness to Collaborate — Readiness of certain factional representatives to work together around an issue(s) is determined by gathering data prior to forming the coalition or through observation during initial contacts and meetings.
4. Emergence of Conveners and Stakeholders (members) — One or more people who believe that certain stakeholders could form a coalition take the initiative and call the first meetings. Representatives of factions agree to continue meeting and members are accepted.

Phase 2

Stabilization — Coalition members understand each other's values, interests, goals and preferences. Norms, procedures and rules for operating are established and form the basis for future work.

Stages:

5. Recognizing Values, Interests and Directions — Open discussion of members' values and interests and their preferences regarding the issues at stake. Establishing overarching goals that help focus collaborative efforts.
6. Getting Operational Agreements — Development of group agreements on norms, procedures and rules for how the coalition works.

Phase 3

Activation — Wherein work on the issue, i.e., learning, problem-solving, action-planning, implementation, evaluation and sometimes renewal and redirection, is accomplished.

Stages:

7. Gathering Information — Data on issues is collected and presented by and to the group as a part of the learning and problem-solving process.

8. Establishing Common Ground and Agreement on Issues — Finding the decisions, solutions and actions on which the coalition can act.
9. Implementation — Wherein solutions and plans are activated and evaluated.

The roles one might play during the emergence phase include educator, technical specialist, leader, organizer, secretary, participant, spokesperson and convener. Skills to be played include networking, meetings management, facilitation and assessment.

In the Stabilization Phase, when an educator leads a discussion, conflict often surfaces around disagreement on values, goals and processes or how to operate as a group. Therefore, the conflict management role is needed. Conflict management calls into play the skills of problem solving, mediating, negotiating and facilitation. The leader role may again be required to help set the proper direction.

The activation phase requires skills in problem solving, decision making, action planning and evaluating. Doing those things again brings into play the roles of conflict manager, leader and organizer. Implementation of decisions in particular requires leaders, organizers and spokespeople. Skills are needed in maneuvering through the politics of the public policy arena and in mediating the development of "win-win" solutions. Gathering and providing information brings the educator and technical specialist roles into play. Other roles include secretary and spokesperson.

The coalition-building cases with which I am familiar involved members constantly collecting data. Information is not always gathered in the classical research sense but often directly from observation in the field and through members' network of associates and access to institutional data banks.

In case histories of coalitions, it is common to find coalition-building stages occurring in different sequences. The skills and roles identified in this paper can pop up almost anywhere in the coalition-building process. Even in coalition-building cases in which little advance planning is done, knowing how roles and skills might relate to and affect that process should increase the likelihood of developing successful coalitions.

AN OLD WARNING

Andy Duncan

The Extension Service: Process is our most important product.

Even if you have not spent much time around a land grant university you have probably heard that joke or one like it, though it may have been aimed at some other organization or an individual. There is constant grumbling about groups and people who would rather

"talk than do," who are more interested in the "how to" than the hoped-for result.

What does this have to do with the ranchers, environmental advocates, loggers and, especially, the extension professionals in the video you just watched about the Oregon Watershed Improvement Coalition (OWIC), and what does it have to do with Fielding's analysis of the coalition-building process and roles for extension in that process?

I believe "process backlash" represents a significant danger to proponents of extension involvement in coalitions that promote learning and problem solving. But, before I elaborate, let me explain that I have not done studies of coalitions. I am a professional communicator, a listener and an observer, as anyone in my field must be.

I am here today for two reasons. First, because I got "up close and personal" with OWIC members while co-producing the video about the coalition. For almost a year, I immersed myself in the history and inter workings of this coalition, which happens to be the type that allows people who are usually at odds to educate one another. Second, I am here because for three years or so I have been a member of the leadership team of the Oregon State University Extension Service's Public Issues Education Initiative. In that capacity I have been, in a sense, working between public policy education specialists like many of you and county extension agents and area specialists. Let me be honest. That is an ugly place, at times.

I imagine many of you are experts on group processes. I do not know about your states, but in Oregon I have seen county extension agents cringe when you use the word "process." I shudder to think what the reaction of those agents might be if, with no tip-toeing into the topic, Fielding started delivering his presentation about how coalition building is a "flexible iterative process rather than a linear sequence of events," and about the roles these agents could play in various phases and simultaneous stages.

Academics want data. I do not have any. But my guess is that the majority of county agents are quite familiar with the importance of tackling assignments in a systematic way, of using a sound process. What they also are familiar with, I suspect, is that a significant number of potential coalition members have little tolerance for "the government" leading them, or even being involved with them, in anything.

Now, I realize lots of extension specialists and agents appreciate how important the process is in building a coalition. *They* probably grumble about others who "shoot from the hip," hitting the wrong targets (perhaps wounding innocent bystanders and inciting riotous group behavior). But, frankly, my impression is that public policy specialists do a much better job of communicating with the "process-

is-important folks" than with the "just-do-it crowd." In fact, I think public policy specialists have a serious communication problem with the "just-do-it" types. Let me use a couple of examples to illustrate:

Last spring, at an Oregon workshop intended to improve extension professionals' skills in areas linked to public issues education work, I heard a county agent remark about coalition building that "there is a real danger in a process or system. People may feel it is manipulative, like leading sheep." Later I heard this same agent explaining, in a pretty animated way, how a natural resource issues consensus group he was involved with quickly went from "confrontation to visioning" and spent a long time on that so members of the group could vent their energies on how the land "could be and should be," rather than on how they disagreed with one another.

This agent still claimed to have no use for "process people" — after he had become involved as a subject matter specialist in a coalition-building process he apparently felt was constructive. Why the paradox? I will not attempt to identify all the possible sociological and psychological factors. I will tell you what it seemed like. It seemed like his intense interest in the issues the coalition was addressing just plain overpowered his fears about negative reactions from people who might feel manipulated by a process (I suspect this person's actions offer a clue about what to emphasize in order to communicate effectively with people leery of process).

Recently, while philosophizing about how to build coalitions, another critic of "process people" told me he believes "they use those big words so you'll think you need them. That is part of the stinking problem." How about some emphasis, he added, on common sense? How about emphasizing the importance of truly caring about the issues you are trying to deal with, so *that* comes across to the clients? How about more emphasis on the importance of real expertise in subject matter closely related to the coalition's field of interest?

Wild rambling? I do not know. You can find support for a range of viewpoints. For example, these last comments do not seem incompatible with Lesson #8 in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Cluster Evaluation Final Report on Innovative Public Policy Education Projects (Greene, Hahn and Waterman, pp. 25-26):

> Public policy education can be effective in the absence of a formal coalition, but not in the absence of the spirit or broad intentions of a coalition, specifically, the commitment to meaningfully incorporating diversity — by offering policy alternatives that reflect different points of view and, at root, different values — in the form and function of the program offered.

In that same evaluation, a coalition member said, simply: "Coalitions should be bound by a purpose and not by a structure (p. 26) . . . ."

It may appear that I am "with" the process critics, arguing against the importance of Fielding's analysis of the coalition-building process and roles for extension within that process. I do not mean to. I think his process model is valuable. I am simply issuing the warning that there are other ways of looking at coalition building that might be more valuable to certain extension agents, specialists and others. Or, at least, there are approaches that might "ease" certain individuals into studying a model like the one Fielding described.

Bill Krueger, the extension specialist and department head who spearheaded the Oregon Watershed Improvement Coalition, told me this about his experience:

> When I got involved with OWIC I didn't know anything about social sciences or coalition building. I hadn't had any education in the theory or practice of how you get people to do various things or what you should do to get people to do things. We just jumped into it and decided that what we needed to do was to stop the fights that were beginning about natural resources — and to help people get the best information they could to make decisions. That's really all it was.

I do not believe Bill Krueger. I do not believe "That's really all it was." And I wish we had more down-to-earth information on the nuances of how he and practical-minded extension professionals like him play roles in the building of coalitions. I think it would engage agents and specialists who find much of the literature of process too "ivory tower." I suggest you involve more people like Bill Krueger in your future meetings.

Maybe what is needed are more diaries, not journal articles?

ISSUE EDUCATION STYLES

Judith A. Burridge

"Issues don't polarize, stuckness does." What educators and facilitators need to do is to be able to adventure or operate in an ad hoc manner when people get stuck (Friedman). Issue educational styles have been discussed by the two preceding speakers. I would like to emphasize that the style or process used by an issue educator needs to fit the audience with whom s/he is dealing. You have listened to Andy Duncan who has described Bill Krueger's method of dealing with conflict. His process skills are covert in his style of delivery and he takes pride in stating he wants nothing to do with "that process stuff."

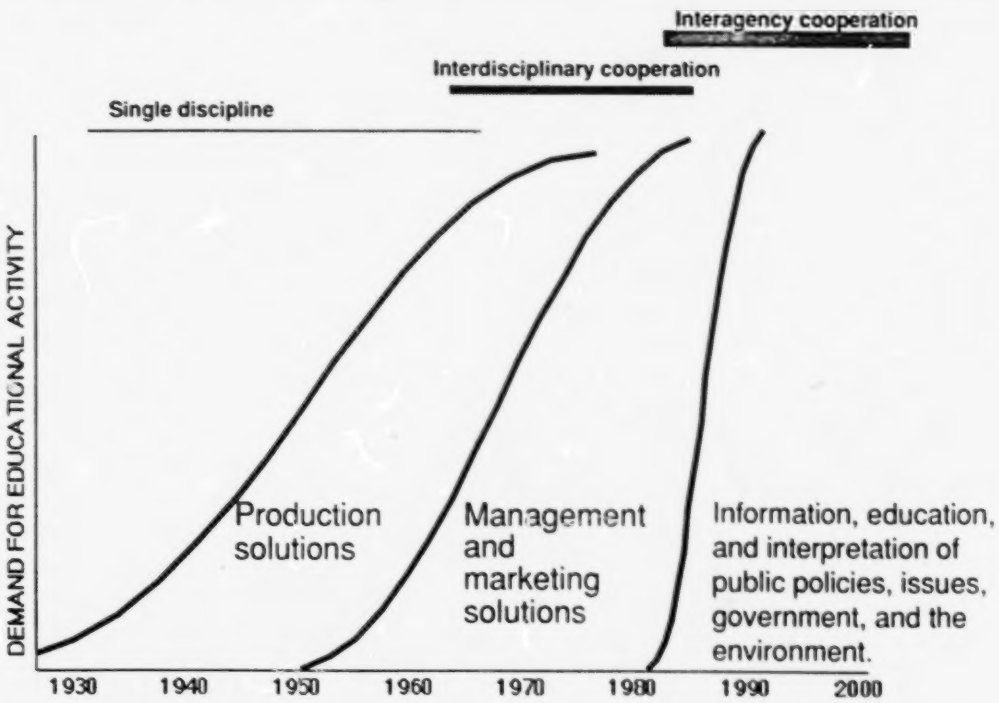
Fielding, on the other hand, discussed a process of coalition building and developed the study guide to go with the satellite program we just viewed. Both emphasize the use of process skills in order to

reach educational goals. Furthermore, others say if you know process, you don't need to be an expert in the subject being discussed.

I would like to suggest that extension educators need to balance their use of process skills and educational expertise in order to have optimum outcomes in public policy education. While sitting in a Family Community Leadership meeting with volunteers and staff members, a question was asked, "Now, what process is occurring here?" Wayne Shull, the staff member who was the presenter, did a quick analysis of what process was taking place. My thought was, "My, he's smooth, we weren't aware of the process techniques being used." When process is obvious it may become annoying and distract from the issue being discussed.

Demands for extension education are changing. O. E. Smith, director of the Oklahoma State University Extension Service, uses this diagram (Figure 1) to illustrate current expectations of extension education. Early in the century, expectations for agricultural extension programs centered on production solutions and usually involved a single discipline in the solution. During the boom years of the 1950s problems became more complex and required expertise that crossed disciplines. In agriculture, this was accomplished by marketing and management education as well as education about production. Basic production, marketing and management education are needed for

Figure 1. The Changing Demand for Extension Education



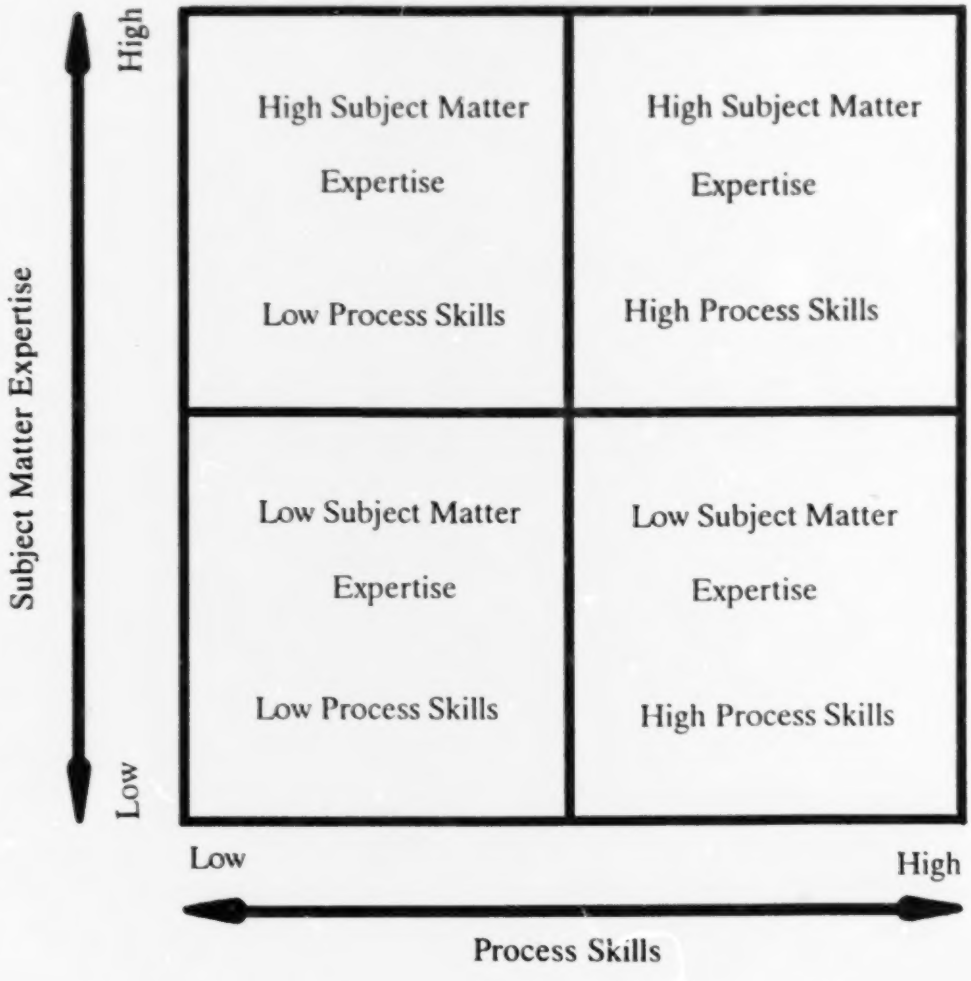
Source: O. E. Smith, Oregon State University Extension Service, 1989

today's complex agricultural problems, but the added dimension of information, education and interpretation of public policies, emerging issues and government regulation is also required. Today's problems require that we reach beyond the university and extension walls and seek cooperation with other agencies (Smith).

When looking at Smith's model, consider it from a different perspective. Look at the curved lines describing the demands as production education, enabling education and public issues education, or, using the popular analogy, catching the fish for them, showing them how to fish or letting them figure out how fishing is done.

Extension faculty, if they are going to be successful, must analyze their style of teaching, and the learning styles of their audience. They must be able to adjust their facilitation and teaching styles to fit the learning styles of their clientele. I suggest borrowing on Hershey and Blanchard's leadership model (Hershey and Blanchard) to view issues education from the styles of the teacher/facilitator and learner/participant (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Issue Education Styles



On the vertical axis we look at the subject matter strength. On the horizontal axis is plotted process skills. Consideration should be given to balancing the styles of both the facilitator and the participants. When they are not synchro nized, either subject matter expertise or process skills may become annoying. It is not as important where you are on the quadrant as it is to balance your style with those of the participants.

There are many styles involved in how we process information. Michael Quinn Patton talks about sending students to a county commissioner's meeting to learn how the politicians process information. Do they use logic? Do they use storytelling? Do they like the dialectic model? Are they "big picture" or "little picture" people? His message: adapt your style of delivery to get what you want (Patton).

R. J. Hildreth, retired director of the Farm Foundation, when teaching FCL volunteers about public testimony, suggested balancing the emotional (normative) and the logical (positive) as a process of presenting information to decision makers (Hildreth).

Adaptability of facilitators' styles with that of participants is the way to of getting from stuckness to working together on solutions to issues and problems.

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